

THE EMOTIVE 1941 D.F.M. TO A PILOT OF 49 AND 149 SQUADRONS R.A.F. WHO ON 1 MARCH 1943 TOOK PART IN A RAID ON BERLIN, DURING WHICH HIS STIRLING WAS HIT BY FLAK AND THEN ATTACKED BY A NIGHT FIGHTER WHICH BADLY DAMAGED THE AIRCRAFT, KILLING AND MORTALLY WOUNDING TWO OF THE CREW. UNWOUNDED, THIS PILOT SOMEHOW MANAGED TO GET HIS AIRCRAFT AS FAR AS DIEPPE BEFORE RUNNING OUT OF FUEL AND IN A REMARKABLE ACT OF COURAGE, CALLED FOR HIS SURVIVING CREW TO BAIL OUT, KEEPING AT THE CONTROLS OF HIS AIRCRAFT SO THEY COULD PARACHUTE TO SAFETY, WHICH MEANT CERTAIN DEATH FOR HIMSELF. HIS LAST WORDS TO HIS W/O P WERE "CHEERIO. GOOD SHOW OLD BOY". HE WOULD RECEIVE A POSTHUMOUS M.I.D. IN 1945, ALMOST CERTAINLY AS THE STORY OF HIS FINAL FLIGHT CAME TO LIGHT



DISTINGUISHED FLYING MEDAL, G.V.I.R. '742977. SGT. R. E. RICHMAN. R.A.F.'

D.F.M. *London Gazette* 6 June 1941, the original recommendation states:

'Sergeant Richman has completed 27 operations against the enemy during the course of which he has completed 162 hours operational flying. He has always shown outstanding keenness and enthusiasm. He has on more than one occasion volunteered and carried out operations on successive nights. Amongst other notable operations which he has carried out as Captain of aircraft have been low-level attacks on the Power Station near Kassel in October, 1940, at a height of 1,000 feet. He alone out of a considerable number of aircraft found the target and obtained a direct hit. On an oil target near Cologne in December, 1940, under difficult weather conditions, he again made a low-level attack at

1500 feet in spite of severe opposition and scored direct hits. His operations have always been characterised by dash and determination, but he has in addition shown cool judgement, skill and good qualities of leadership as Captain of aircraft. Sergeant Richman's ability, courage and determination under adverse weather conditions in pressing home his attacks have set an excellent example to other pilots in his squadron.'


M.I.D. London Gazette 1 January 1945.

Roland Edward Richman was born at Sculcoates, East Riding, Yorkshire in 1921, the son of John and Emily Richman. Having joined the Civil Air Guard, he learned to fly in March 1939 and was mobilised with the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve when war broke out. Initially serving as a Flight Sergeant, piloting Hampden's with 49 Squadron out of Scampton, his first sortie was on 17 September 1940 targeting barge positions.

Further bombing raids over Germany followed with five in October and two more in November, the second of which was targeting an A.A. concentration on 24 November. Further attacks on A.A. positions followed notably at Wilhelmshaven on the night of 1-2 December. One of his most important attacks was later that month over Cologne. He saw a raid on Berlin on 9 April took part in his 27th and final sortie with the squadron on the night of 12/13 April 1941. Two weeks later he was posted to the 14th Operational Training Unit and commissioned Pilot Officer on 13 December 1941.

FOR GALLANTRY
Decoration for Hull
R.A.F. Sergeant

Sergeant Rowland Edward Richman, who has been awarded the Distinguished Flying Medal for gallantry and resource in flying operations, is a former Sidmouth-street Council School boy. Twenty-one years of age, he joined the Volunteer Reserve when he was 17, and trained in the East Riding. He was then a clerk in the office of the Humber Fruit Brokers' Association, and when war broke out he was called up for active service. Of a very modest disposition, he has not mentioned in his letters to his parents any outstanding adventure which has earned for him this high distinction, but he has mentioned that he has taken part in many bombing raids over Germany and other occupied countries, having spent over 200 hours in the air on these raids. Some of these experiences have been particularly thrilling and dangerous, but Richman has always brought his machine home safely. At present he is training other pilots at a station somewhere in England.



149 SQUADRON

Promoted Flying Officer on 1 October 1942, Richman converted to Short Stirling's and started a second tour when he was posted to 149 Squadron on 27 December 1942. Flying Stirling's out of Lakenheath, Richman took part in his first sortie on 15 January 1943, a bombing mission to Lorient. A Sortie to Hamburg followed on the 3 February, Minelaying on the 5th, Lorient again on the 13th. These were followed by sorties to Cologne the 14th, Lorient on the 16th, Wilhelmshaven on the 19th and St Nazaire on the 28 February.

On the night of 1-2 March 1943, piloting Stirling 'W' EK692 took off from Lakenheath on a sortie to Berlin. Reaching Berlin, they were coned by a mass of searchlights over the target and hit by flak, which damaged the aircraft but caused no casualties. At the controls Richman was able to pull them out immediate danger, however minutes later they found themselves under attack from a night fighter which ripped into the bomber.

Not only was the Stirling bomber damaged for a second time but the mid upper gunner; Sergeant Croft, was killed and their Navigator, Sergeant Nunn, was mortally wounded and soon the crew found themselves lost and unable to navigate properly. Severely damaged and defenceless, Richman managed to evade further enemy contact and got as far as Dieppe, a distance of around 900km. However now almost out of fuel, Richman made an almost unimaginable and courageous decision and ordered the crew to abandon the aircraft. To enable them to do this, Richman would have to stay at the controls of the Stirling, keeping it as level as he could as it was going down, thus ensuring that the surviving crew could parachute to safety. This meant certain death for himself.



A 149 SQUADRON SHORT STIRLING

All of the 5 surviving crewmembers were able to escape the stricken aircraft and were taken prisoner, the severely wounded Navigator dying of his wounds. Flight Lieutenant Richman and Sergeant Croft's bodies were recovered from the wreckage and buried with Sergeant Nunn at Dieppe Canadian War Cemetery. Hautot-Sur-Mer, France. Rowland Richman was just 22 years old at the time of his death

Details of his final sortie and the crew can be found on this fine website:

<https://aircrewremembered.com/richman-rowland.html>

The following remarkable testimony of one of the surviving crew, the Canadian Wireless Operator, Pilot Officer R J Taylor. It was written from Stalag Luft III on 4 August 1943 to inform Mrs W. Richman of the heroic death of her husband:

'Dear Mrs Richman,

No letter have I received more gladly than yours this a.m. I have tried everywhere to get your address but always failed. One of the first things I want to do after reaching England is to see you and Bob Nunn's wife. Can you write to her for me? Golders Green is all I know. Censorship limits details. I will have my wife write 195 Wellesley St. Toronto. We were coned over the target, hit (no casualties). Only Richie could, and did get us away. Minutes later a night fighter hit us. Don Crofts and Bob Munn was badly wounded. He never complained not even when we later pulled his chute and dropped him. We had nothing to give us positions, nor courses. For hours Richie guided the twice damaged defenceless plane from one danger area to the next until at last we were lost over sea and clouds, with nothing to guide us we came very low under cloud base. It was not England. Petrol gone Richie bailed us out. In vain we took Bob with us. Cheerily Richie greeted us goodbye and slapped us on the back as we went down to jump. No man ever died more bravely. He died that I & we might be certain to live. I can still feel that last gentle pat, still hear that quiet kindly "Cheerio. Good show old boy". 3 minutes later he was dead. The plane did not burn. The 3 were buried together. Our captors were very kind. I regret I did not ask for pictures. Haven't seen the 4 N.C.O.'s since 4-3-43. None of us in least injured.'



Pilot Officer Taylor's official R.A.F. statement goes into more detail:

"Coned over target, hit (no casualties). Minutes later N/F (night fighter) hit us – Crofts (killed by shell in chest) and Nunn badly injured (wounded in groin and severed arm)...Instruments u/s, for hours the pilot guided defenceless plane from one danger to the next until we were at last over sea and cloud. Petrol gone, crew except pilot and Crofts baled out...Nunn didn't complain even when later we pulled his chute and dropped him ..The plane did not burn. 3 buried together."

Flight Lieutenant Richman was posthumously Mentioned in Despatches towards the end of the war, this being published in the London Gazette, 1 January 1945. Given the length of time between this and Richman's death, it is almost certain that this was as a result of the heroic story of his final acts of courage came to light.

By the time of his death, Richman had taken part in 36 operational sorties with 49 and 149 Squadrons. Further details of the pilot can be found on the excellent 49 Squadron website:

https://www.49squadron.co.uk/personnel_index/detail/Richman_RE



Condition GVF, mounted on its investiture pin. Sold with copied research, including LG's, 49 Squadron operational reports, DFM recommendation, letter from P/O Taylor and his POW questionnaire etc. Also digital copies of 149 Squadron operational reports. Service papers for this pilot have been applied for and will be forwarded to the buyer when received.

A really quite outstanding D.F.M. to and extremely courageous young pilot who sacrificed his life to save his crewmates